

**REMARKS**

This Amendment and Reply is intended to be completely responsive to the Final Office Action mailed July 9, 2009. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present Application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow. Claims 1-26, 28 and 29, which were previously withdrawn from consideration, have been canceled without prejudice to further prosecution on the merits. Claims 34, 36 and 39 have been amended. New Claims 41-53 have been added to provide claims of varying scope. No new matter has been added. Accordingly, Claims 34-53 will be pending in the present Application upon entry of this Amendment and Reply.

A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

**Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102**

On pages 2-3 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 34-40 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,991,841 to Cowelchuk et al. (“Cowelchuk et al.”). On page 3 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 34, 37-40 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,895,613 to Nakai et al. (“Nakai et al.”). These rejections should be withdrawn because neither Cowelchuk et al. nor Nakai et al. disclose, teach or suggest the claimed invention.

For example, independent Claim 34 (as amended) recites a “trim component for a vehicle” comprising, among other elements, a “substrate having a channel defined by a first wall and an opposite second wall; [and] a skin having a protrusion and coupled to the substrate by engagement of the protrusion with the channel, the protrusion being in direct engagement with both the first wall and the second wall of the channel.”

Neither Cowelchuk et al. nor Nakai et al. disclose, teach or suggest such a trim component for a vehicle. In contrast, Cowelchuk et al. and Nakai et al. each disclose a molded part wherein a skin or cover layer is coupled to a substrate by having a protrusion of the skin

directly bonded to only one side face of a substrate rather than being coupled to the substrate by having the protrusion be in direct engagement with both a first wall and an opposite second wall of a channel defined by the substrate. Applicants are not arguing that Cowelchuk et al. and Nakai et al. do not disclose a skin having a protrusion that is engaged with a substrate, as was previously believed by the Examiner. Rather, Applicants submit that neither Cowelchuk et al. nor Nakai et al. disclose a protrusion that directly engages both a first wall and an opposite second wall of a channel defined by the substrate to couple the skin to the substrate.

For example, Cowelchuk et al. discloses a “cover layer 16” having a “perimeter portion 32” with a plurality of “teeth 70” on one side that are configured to simply abut against only one surface of the “substrate 12” (i.e., the surface of a “substrate perimeter portion 44”). When a “foaming material 36” is added through an “interface 14,” the “perimeter portion 32,” including “teeth 70,” gets forced against the surface of “substrate perimeter portion 44” to form a seal (col. 4, lines 30-49). As clearly shown in Figures 4, 6 and 8a, the “forming material 36” separates the “perimeter portion 32” and “teeth 70” from an opposite wall of the “substrate 12” after the “foaming material 36” is added. As such, Cowelchuk et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a skin that is configured to be coupled to a substrate by the direct engagement of a protrusion with both a first wall and a second wall of a channel defined by the substrate, as required by independent Claim 34.

Turning to Nakai et al., Nakai et al. discloses a molded plastic product having a “pad housing 13,” a “skin 21” and a “foam P” (see, e.g., Figure 1). The “skin 21” has a “side face 22” that is bent over and provided with an “elastic seal 25” that, along with the “side face 22,” is allowed to abut against only a “sidewall 12” of the “pad housing 13” during the molding process (col. 3, lines 19-30). Nakai et al. discloses that the “side face 22,” with the “elastic seal 25,” becomes coupled to the “sidewall 12” due to the foaming pressure generated during the molding process (col. 4, lines 18-28). The Examiner asserted that in Figure 1, the area between “sidewalls 12” forms a channel, and appears to asserting that “sidewall 12” constitutes both a first wall and a second wall. Applicants respectively disagree, and submit that Figure 1 is cross sectional view of the component and that “sidewall 12” is a single wall. Nevertheless, assuming arguendo that

“sidewall 12” is both a first wall and a second wall, Applicants submit that a protrusion is not in direct engagement with both the first wall and the second wall, because under this line of reasoning, a first “elastic seal 25” would abut only the first wall and a second “elastic seal 25” would abut only the second wall. A single protrusion or elastic seal would not directly engage both the first wall and the second wall. As such, Nakai et al. does not disclose, teach or suggest a skin that is configured to be coupled to a substrate by the direct engagement of a protrusion with both a first wall and a second wall of a channel defined by the substrate, as required by independent Claim 34.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of independent Claim 34 because at least one element of such claim is not disclosed, taught or suggested by Cowelchuk et al. or Nakai et al. Claims 35-40, as they depend from independent Claim 34, are allowable therewith for at least the reasons set forth above, without regard to the further patentable subject matter set forth in such claims. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of Claims 34-40 is respectfully requested.

### **Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103**

On pages 3-4 of the Detailed Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 34 and 36 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japanese Patent No. 2000006283 (“JP ‘283”). This rejection should be withdrawn because JP ‘283 does not disclose, teach or suggest the claimed invention.

For example, as set forth above, independent Claim 34 (as amended) recites a “trim component for a vehicle” comprising, among other elements, a “substrate having a channel defined by a first wall and an opposite second wall; [and] a skin having a protrusion and coupled to the substrate by engagement of the protrusion with the channel, the protrusion being in direct engagement with both the first wall and the second wall of the channel.”

JP ‘283 does not disclose, teach or suggest such a trim component for a vehicle. In contrast, JP ‘283 discloses a molded component having a skin 5 that is allowed to simply abut against a surface of a core 11 (see, e.g., Abstract; Figures 2 and 3). The Examiner asserted that

JP '283 discloses the claimed invention but shows the substrate having a protrusion and the skin having a channel. The Examiner concluded that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to have reversed to the two components such that the protrusion is located on the skin and the channel is located on the substrate. Applicants note that while it appears that the skin 5 may define a channel or recess adjacent to its free end, it seems clear from Figure 3 that no portion of the core is received within this recess when the skin 5 is abutted against the core 11. Not only is no portion of the core within the recess, there is no structure that is in direct engagement with both a first wall and a second wall of the recess. Further still, even if such a configuration was shown, which Applicants submit is not, Applicants submit that it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to have reversed to the two components. As such, JP '283 does not disclose, teach or suggest a skin that is configured to be coupled to a substrate by the direct engagement of a protrusion with both a first wall and a second wall of a channel defined by the substrate, as required by independent Claim 34.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of independent Claim 34 because at least one element of such claim is not disclosed, taught or suggested by JP '283. Claim 36, as it depends from independent Claim 34, is allowable therewith for at least the reasons set forth above, without regard to the further patentable subject matter set forth in such claim. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection of Claims 34 and 36 is respectfully requested.

### **New Claims**

Applicants have added new Claims 41-53 to provide claims of varying scope. New Claims 41-53, which depend from independent Claim 34, are allowable therewith at least because of their dependency, without regard to the further patentable subject matter set forth in such claims. Consideration and allowance of new Claims 41-53 is respectfully requested.

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Applicants believe that the present Application is now in condition for allowance. In particular, even when the elements of Applicants' claims, as discussed above, are given a broad construction and interpreted to cover equivalents, the cited references do not teach, disclose, or suggest the claimed subject matter. Favorable reconsideration of the present Application as amended is respectfully requested.

Further, Applicants respectfully put the Patent Office and all others on notice that all arguments, representations, and/or amendments contained herein are only applicable to the present Application and should not be considered when evaluating any other patent or patent application including any patents or patent applications which claim priority to this patent application and/or any patents or patent applications to which priority is claimed by this patent application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by the credit card payment instructions in EFS-Web being incorrect or absent, resulting in a rejected or incorrect credit card transaction, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicants hereby petition for such extension under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 and authorize payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. The Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned by telephone if the Examiner believes that another telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present Application. Please direct all correspondence to the undersigned attorney or agent at the address indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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